

"Aquifer Watch" Program Benefits Students

Groundwater Guardian Featured ROA

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The Barton Springs/
Edwards Aquifer
Conservation

District along with members of the Austin Region, Texas Groundwater Guardian team and Texas Watch will embark on a pilot program intended to educate junior high students about the unique groundwater system of the Austin area. The goal of the program, entitled "Aquifer Watch," is to establish a groundwater monitoring program that focuses on groundwater quality, unlike the many monitoring programs in the state that address only surface water issues.

The program is set to take place during the 2000-2001 school year, and will link junior high/middle school students studying Earth Science with a well near their school that is appropriate for sampling. Students will visit their "adopted well" four times throughout the school year, in which District staff

will assist the group with water sampling, e-line measurements for the aquifer level, and on-site chemical analysis using titrators and spectrophotometers. Students will test the groundwater supply for several parameters including alkalinity, temperature, chlorides, ph, fluorides, and nitrates.

Data collected by the students will be recorded and sent to the District, in which District staff may use the information to help identify water quality trends in the area. Reported data as well as any other information a classroom would like to include about their "adopted" well will also be posted on "their" page on the District's website. In addition to time spent in the field collecting water samples and measuring water levels, District staff will also work with teachers and students to teach them more about their "adopted" well. Visits to the classroom or to a field site will explain character-

istics related to the well's depth, geology, location relevant to the aquifer, and previous owners and uses.

Although evaluation of the program and documentation of the results is set to take place during the summer of 2001, it is hoped that the lessons learned from the program will last a lifetime. Through the information found on the District's website, as well as a culminating event for all program participants, District staff hope to encourage communication between students throughout the region. Through this increased communication and the lessons learned about water quality and quantity through well sampling, students will be able to develop a true appreciation for the importance regional water issues play in Central Texas and throughout the United States.

The "Aquifer Watch" pilot program will strive to involve at least four middle schools/junior

highs, in which The Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District will provide a curriculum unit that will introduce students to the aquifer, and provide them with information regarding its characteristics. Texas Watch, a statewide, volunteer water monitoring program coordinated from the campus of Southwest Texas State University, will fund the writing of an "Aquifer Watch" manual following the completion of the pilot year. If you have questions or would like to receive more information about the "Aquifer Watch" program, please contact Gail Garretson via e-mail at gail@mail.bseacd.org



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